Q&A

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Q. I thought the tough modern roses bloomed all through the summer? Our Belindas Dream and Knockout roses look nearly as bad as our hybrid tea roses now that the hot weather has settled in.

A. It depends on the site and what kind of care the roses have been receiving. There are lots of Knockouts, Belinda Dreams and other tough modern roses ( also some of the old-fashioned roses) that are still making a good show.

About September 1 all the roses should perk up to begin their fall flush of growth to include blooms. For hybrid tea roses give them a light pruning, fertilize, and restore the insect and disease sprays. Now that the rains have slowed it is also time to resume the weekly irrigation. The tough roses don’t absolutely need all the same attention but some fertilizer and irrigation will increase their performance as well.

Q. We can’t grow lilacs here in Central Texas but what was that plant that you mentioned on your radio show that had flowers with a fragrance like lilacs?

A. Fanick’s phlox is a perennial with large clusters of pink and white blooms that have a wonderful fragrance that reminds me of lilac. The blooms make a long-lasting cut flower.

Q.Our Meyer lemons are showing some type of disease symptom. There are little black specks on some of the fruit on the outside of the plant. Is there anything we can do to protect the other fruit?

A. The symptom you are describing sounds more like grackle pecks than a disease. It is hard to imagine but young grackles seem to get some type of nutritional value from the peeling of citrus fruit. The pecks are usually shallow and the damage is limited, other than it makes the few fruit that are attacked ugly. The fruit can still be used. The trees can be covered with bird-netting but the usual pattern is for the attacks to be limited to a few fruit.

Q.Remind us again how high our St Augustine and Bermuda grass should be mowed.

A. Mow St Augustine at 3.5inches tall and Bermuda at 1.5inches or less for best performance.Zoysia grass should be mowed at 2inches high.

Q. Is it too late to plant fall tomatoes?

A. No, but plant them as soon as possible. Include some of the heat-setting fast maturing varieties such as Roma Surprise and Surefire if you can find them at your favorite nursery.